

CPM Project

ADDRESSING THE PSYCHIATRIST SHORTAGE AT THE ANDERSON-OCONEE-PICKENS- MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

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South Carolina Department of Mental Health

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Problem Statement

The mission of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses. This is accomplished by serving adults and children affected by significant emotional disorders and serious mental illness. The South Carolina Department of Mental Health is committed to eliminating the stigma associated with mental illness and promotes the philosophy of recovery. The aim is to achieve these goals in collaboration with stakeholders and to assure the highest quality of culturally competent services possible. To accomplish this mission, the South Carolina Department of Mental Health believes that people are best served in or near their own homes or the community of their choice. This is the reason that the South Carolina Department of Mental Health operates seventeen Community Mental Health Centers. These centers have facilities located throughout the state in local communities. Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Center is one of the seventeen centers that serve the State of South Carolina.

In order for the South Carolina Department of Mental Health to fulfil the mission to the seventeen Community Mental Health Centers, qualified licensed psychiatrists are needed. The South Carolina Department of Mental Health's Community Mental Health Centers are always looking to hire psychiatrists at each of their locations throughout the state. This has been a struggle throughout the state due to the shortage of psychiatrists both in South Carolina and nationwide.

This project focuses on this ongoing shortage in regards specifically to the Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Center in regard to hiring of qualified licensed psychiatrists.

DATA COLLECTION

In order to find the information needed for this project, I collected data from the State of South Carolina, Locum Tenens agencies, and multiple articles showing how the psychiatrist shortage developed and has grown. This information shows the implications regarding this shortage and its ramifications on mental health in South Carolina and across the country. The data also contains information on what is being done to help alleviate the crisis. The following definitions will be used in discussing data analysis and the implementation plan.

1. **Psychiatrist** - a medical practitioner specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.
2. **Locum Tenens** - one filling an office for a time or temporarily taking the place of another - used especially of a doctor.
3. **Locum Tenens Agencies** - companies that provide physician staffing services for hospitals, outpatient medical centers, government and military facilities, group practices, community health centers and correctional facilities.
4. **Telepsychiatry** - is the application of telemedicine to the specialty field of psychiatry. The term typically describes the delivery of psychiatric assessment and care through telecommunications technology, usually videoconferencing.
5. **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** - provides support, education and advocacy regarding mental illness.
6. **Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)** - A nonprofit organization of U.S. medical schools, teaching hospitals, and academic societies.

7. **American Medical Association (AMA)** - A voluntary association of physicians in the United States which sets standards for the medical profession and advocates on behalf of physicians and patients.

DATA ANALYSIS

The shortage of Psychiatrists has been well documented by organizations, including the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).

In March, 2015 the AAMC released a study entitled “The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections from 2013 to 2025”. The AAMC concluded in this study that in the United States “demand for physicians continues to grow faster than supply which is leading to a projected shortfall of between 46,100 and 90,400 by 2025” (AAMC, 2015). The report emphasized that while primary care doctors will be in short supply, the steepest deficits may be among the specialist physicians who care for the elderly, including psychiatrists.

The shortage of psychiatrists is growing in part as the need has grown for behavioral health services. According to NAMI:

- One in every five adults in America experiences some form of a mental illness.
- 13.6 million Adults in America live with a serious mental illness.
- 60% of adults with a mental illness received no mental health services in the prior year.
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24.
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of deaths for adults in the U.S.
- The average delay between mental health symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.
- \$193 billion in lost earnings a year result from serious mental illness. (NAMI, 2016).

These statistics make it imperative to consider the availability of psychiatric services, mainly because the subject of mental illness has for so long been avoided by both policy makers and the public.

According to the AMA, “There are currently 28,250 psychiatrists in active practice in the U.S. Of that number, 59 percent of psychiatrists are 55 years of age or older, meaning a large percentage of the active psychiatry population will be retiring or reducing workload in the near future. In South Carolina, there are 398 psychiatrists which equals to 8.2 percent per 100,000 people” (Merritt Hawkins Physician Staffing Resource, AMA Master File),

What is really behind the shortage is that new graduates are not replacing those that are planning to retire. Inadequate pay is a factor in discouraging some medical students from choosing psychiatry. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “the mean annual wage is \$182,700 for psychiatrists. This is slightly below the mean for general practitioners and 28 percent below that for surgeons” (The Blade, 2015).

Many psychiatrists are also switching to a cash only practice out of frustration with what they consider to be inadequate reimbursement from government and private insurance companies.

There also remain issues of stigma around mental disorders in regards to medical students choosing psychiatry. This leads to the people suffering the most not receiving the care that they need.

These factors alone are hard to overcome in the private sector much less a state mental health department. It has been very difficult to recruit psychiatrists to positions throughout the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. Other state mental health departments are having similar issues. Emory University found that “there are slightly more than 1,000 psychiatrists in Georgia. The problem is worst in rural areas and nearly half of Georgia’s 159 counties do not have a single psychiatrist.” Dr. Ben Druss, directs the Center for Behavioral Health Policy at Emory’s Rollins School of Public Health. He states “one way to boost the number of psychiatrist and the size of Georgia’s mental health workforce is to increase training in community psychiatry. This training should be happening after residency, in community psychiatry fellowships, it can happen during residency, and it can happen in med school and earlier on as well as other schools that are training medical professionals” (WABE 90.1, 2014).

Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health is always in need of qualified psychiatrists. Our center has locations in each of the three counties included in our catchment area. In the three years that I have been at Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center, we have had a continual advertisement on **jobs.sc.gov** for two openings for full time psychiatrists. We have three staff psychiatrists and also rely on three locum tenen psychiatrists. We have also begun to use telepsychiatry in our center. I will show how we are using the data analysis to implement a plan to help the Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center respond to this shortage.

Implementation Plan

Using the data analysis, the shortage which has been established needs to be addressed. Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center is implementing a broad approach in addressing the psychiatrist shortage. With our need of psychiatrists, comes the problem of attracting psychiatrist to work at a state health department. As we saw in the data analysis, the mean annual wage for psychiatrists is \$182,700. For Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health, “the salary range is \$126,288.00 - \$161,371.00 annually. The hiring range minimum is \$126,288.00 and the maximum is \$161,371.00” (Appendix 1). The state pay classification already puts you behind the private sector in beginning a search for a psychiatrist. With the current staff of three full time psychiatrists we still have need to hire four full time psychiatrists if we could attract qualified candidates.

Due to not being able to fill our positions with full time psychiatrists, we often try to fill that need with locum tenens psychiatrists. Attracting locums is a challenge within itself as the locum tenen agencies are always requesting an increase in the hourly rate to the currently contracted rate that has been established with them. The average locum hourly rate that centers across the state currently pay is \$165. We currently have three locum tenen psychiatrists, each from three different locum tenen agencies, with each having the hourly rate of \$198.25, 160.00 and 145.00 respectfully as outlined within each of the contracts from the three agencies. We of course would love to have staff at the lower rate of \$145.00, but it is hard to attract psychiatrists especially at this rate. When a locum tenen agency has a psychiatrist that is interested in working for Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center, we check their credentials and if that turns out positive, we hire them if possible. The benefit of the highest locum rate of \$198.25

that we currently have is that in that contract it guarantees a psychiatrist for a certain period of time which is generally for two years. You are doing well if you can hire a locum for more than a six month to a year term. This rotating door of psychiatrists helps to alleviate the shortage but it does have ramifications. Many times after a new locum is hired and they begin to see the patients, the new locum will change medication on a patient that had been doing well on their current prescriptions. This rotating door is not the ideal but is needed when you are able to hire a locum.

A newer way that the South Carolina Department of Mental Health has been helping with the psychiatrist shortage is through the use of telepsychiatry. Telepsychiatry is a unique application of modern technology that allows both the patient and his/her doctor to participate in a psychiatric session best described to be as personal as a face to face consultation. This groundbreaking program is an excellent model to provide critical psychiatric care in rural areas of South Carolina. Anderson Oconee Pickens has been using telepsychiatry beginning in 2016.

Quality of service with telepsychiatry is a concern with both patients and providers. Research has shown that “telepsychiatry facilitates effective service-provision in a large number of areas, where access to high-quality services is difficult. It promotes an equality of access, a sense of empowerment among patients and high levels of satisfaction among them. The evidence to date is highly suggestive that it is comparable to face to face care on several aspects of what is traditionally considered effectiveness” (World Journal of Psychiatry, 2015).

The Community Telepsychiatry Program through the South Carolina Department of Mental Health goal is “to improve patient access to psychiatric care, while using resources more efficiently. The Community Telepsychiatry program capitalizes on the use of technology to

increase patient access to care while operating in a network secure environment. The psychiatrists that are seeing patients through the program are providing direct treatment services, including prescribing medication” (Senate Medical Affairs Oversight Subcommittee Summary Report on the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, 2016).

A big barrier in telepsychiatry is licensing. States generally require that doctors be licensed in the same state as the patient they are treating. This means that the psychiatrist would have to have multiple licenses to treat patients across state lines. Currently at Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center, we are only relying on psychiatrists that are employed by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. This could change in the years to come based on the availability of psychiatrists that participate in telepsychiatry.

The psychiatrists that Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center utilizes in the telepsychiatry program have hourly rates range of \$198.25 to \$221.92. Thus, the average cost per hour is higher than that of locum tenen psychiatrists.

The best answer in regards to cost and continuity of service to our patients would be to hire full time psychiatrists. This is very difficult as I previously stated based on the pay scale. There have been two posted openings for over three years for full time psychiatrists. I was able to hire a full time psychiatrist who began work on January 3, 2017. This hire came through an approved full time placement agency that has a contract with the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center did have to pay a placement fee of \$24,000.00. This money is well spent in considering that the psychiatrist will be a state employee bound by the pay grade for the position. In the long run the fee will pay for itself instead of paying a higher locum or telepsychiatry rate for a psychiatrist.

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

In reviewing the data analysis, it is obvious that the psychiatrist shortage will remain a long term problem with no one solution. Encouraging the General Assembly to increase the pay grade for psychiatrists would help alleviate the situation by making the state more competitive with the private sector. Anderson Oconee Pickens Mental Health Center will continue to use the broad approach in addressing this shortage. This would be an applicable approach that could be used across the community mental health centers across the state. We will continue our efforts to hire full time psychiatrists as this has the best potential for stability for our patients as well as having a lower hourly pay rate. We will also employ locum tenen psychiatrists when we have good candidates for our openings. Ultimately, it appears that the long term solution may in fact be the use of telepsychiatry. As the nationwide shortage continues to grow, telepsychiatry will become more of the norm rather than the exception. Combining all three approaches is necessary to meet the needs of our patients both now and in the future.

REFERENCES

Association of American Medical Colleges, March 2015.

https://www.aamc.org/download/426242/data/ihsreportdownload.pdf?cm_mmc=AAMC-ScientificAffairs--PDF--ihsreport

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 2016

<http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>

Merritt Hawkins Physician Staffing Resource, AMA Master File.

https://www.merrithawkins.com/uploadedFiles/mhawhitepaper_psychiatry.pdf

The Blade, October 2015 “Shrinking shortage of psychiatrists facing much of U.S.

<http://www.toledoblade.com/Medical/2015/10/12/Shrinking-profession-Serious-shortage-of-psychiatrists-facing-much-of-U-S.html>

WABE 90.1, May, 2014

<http://news.wabe.org/post/georgia-experiences-psychiatrist-shortage>

World Journal of Psychiatry, September 2015

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4582305/#B31>

Senate Medical Affairs Oversight Subcommittee Summary Report on the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, March 2016

<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/SenateMedicalAffairsCommittee/OversightReports/DMH%20Final%20Report%20and%20Summary%2032316.pdf>

Appendix 1



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
**Department of Mental
Health-MHC Anderson-
Oconee-Pickens**

200 McGee Road
Anderson, SC 29621

<http://www.jobs.sc.gov>

**INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF:
Psychiatrist**

An Equal Opportunity Employer

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OPENING DATE: 03/18/14

CLOSING DATE: Continuous

JOB TITLE: Psychiatrist

CLASS CODE: 9301 - 9304

POSITION NUMBER: 60005160

SLOT NUMBER:

STATE SALARY RANGE:

\$126,288.00 - \$161,371.00 Annually

AGENCY HIRING RANGE - MIN: 126,288.00

AGENCY HIRING RANGE - MAX: 161,371.00

LOCATION: Anderson County, South Carolina

JOB TYPE: FTE - Full-Time

NORMAL WORK SCHEDULE: Monday - Friday (8:30 - 5:00)

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT:

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT SPECIFICS (IF ANY):

AGENCY SPECIFIC APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

You must apply on-line at www.jobs.sc.gov. Follow the status of your application on-line.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:

DMH is a drug-free workplace. All candidates will be required to pass a mandatory Pre-employment drug test.

This position is located at the Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Center, 200 McGee Road, Anderson, SC 29625.

Under limited supervision, assumes and performs responsibilities for the psychiatric and medical treatment of patients of the Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Center.

MINIMUM AND ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

Agency Requirement:**Psychiatrist Certified and Non-Certified:**

Licensed to practice in the State of South Carolina. Completion of full residency (four years) in psychiatry. Board Certification in psychiatry strongly preferred, and required for certified classifications.

Sr. Psychiatrist and Non-Certified:

Licensed to practice medicine in the State of South Carolina. Completion of required residency and two (2) years direct patient care experience. Board Certification in psychiatry strongly preferred and required for certified classifications.

NOTE: If any Agency Requirements are listed above, applicants must also meet those requirements to be considered for the position.

Salary may vary depending on experience and qualifications.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Supplemental questions are considered part of your official application. If you do not answer the supplemental questions, your application is incomplete and will not be reviewed.

Please complete the state application to include all current and previous work history and education. A resume may be attached, but not substituted for a completed employment application. The employment application will be considered incomplete and not forwarded if only a resume is provided and/or supplemental questions are not answered.

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The South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) offers an outstanding package of salary and benefits:

- * Up to \$200K package including benefits
- * Health, life and dental insurance
- * 15 days each annual and sick leave per year
- * 401K as well as State retirement plan
- * Practice Insurance
- * Possible relocation, bonus and tuition loan repayment
- * Offering a Flexible work schedule

Office and support staff for a package equal to market standards and more. The malpractice insurance is second to none.

South Carolina boasts excellent weather with ocean beaches and mountains. Good schools, low taxes, and low cost of living. South Carolina offers the arts including, the world- renowned Spoleto Arts Festival in Charleston, museums, plenty of golfing, sailing, world-class fishing and natural wildlife as well. Professionally SCDMH is recognized for its work in some of the best practice areas of psychiatry, and includes the use of telepsychiatry. Go to www.scdmh.org for more information about SCDMH.

APPLICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AND FILED ONLINE AT:
<http://www.jobs.sc.gov>
 OR
 200 McGee Road
 Anderson, SC 29621

Job #37848
 PSYCHIATRIST
 DH

Psychiatrist Supplemental Questionnaire

- * 1. During the recruiting and selection process, the following items may be requested: a resume, an unofficial copy of your college transcript, 2 letters of recommendation and copies of master and bachelor degrees. Failure to provide the requested documentation in a timely manner could result in disqualification of consideration for this position. Will you be able to provide the required documents in a timely manner?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- * 2. Have you been a resident of the State of South Carolina for the last twelve consecutive months?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- * 3. Do you possess a valid South Carolina Drivers License?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- * 4. Are you eligible for license to practice medicine in the State of South Carolina?
- * 5. Do you have any special licensure or certification? If so, please list.
- * 6. For the Department of Mental Health, have you ever been denied a professional license, or had a professional license revoked or limited by, and/or had any discipline or sanction imposed on you or your practice by a professional licensing board or body? If yes, provide a statement explaining the facts, name of the professional licensing board or body, any action taken by that board or body, and your current status with that board or body.
- * 7. Do you have experience using electronic medical records?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- * 8. Are you on the Registry of Convicted Sex Offenders?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- * 9. Are you willing to take a mandatory pre-employment drug test?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 10. Are you familiar with the DSMIV?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- * Required Question